

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

8 January 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Spacagna (Chairman)

Councillors Cowell, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Hutchings, Johns, Law, Long and Tolchard (Vice-Chair)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, Chris Lewis, David Thomas and Tyerman)

40. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. Quarterly Housing Audit and Compliance Report

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance – Councillor Tyerman, Managing Director – Liam Montgomery and Housing Manager – Anita Merritt presented the submitted inaugural Quarterly Housing Audit and Compliance Report for properties formerly held by TorVista Homes and responded to questions. The Report covered the period up to October and since that date some of the TorVista Homes housing stock had transferred to Torbay Council and the remaining stock would transfer as and when the homes became vacant.

The Board asked questions in relation to the reporting periods covered by the Report; why only three Wards were mentioned in the Report; confirmation that no complaints had been received during the reporting period; why there was no spend on health and safety training for staff during the reporting period; and when it refers to cases that were closed was that from TorVista Homes or the tenant's perspective.

In response to questions, Members were advised that this was the first of quarterly report but that there had been monthly reports to the Directors' Overview Meeting (DOM) for the first six months following the transfer of TorVista Homes to Torbay Council. Previously the TorVista Board had received the audit and compliance reports and the Overview and Scrutiny Board was taking over the oversight of this on behalf of Torbay Council.

The Board noted that the properties covered by the Report only covered three Wards within the Torbay, but future reports may include other Wards as more properties were picked up. There had been no complaints received by tenants during the reporting period.

It was noted that there had been no externally funded health and safety training, but that staff were trained at least annually via iLearn online training for health and safety and when any new health and safety issues were flagged up.

Members were informed that cases were closed by agreement with the tenant and TorVista Homes and if any further issues occurred they would be reopened.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes that the former TorVista Homes Audit and Compliance Key Performance Indicators report demonstrates that the Council is compliant in all areas for the former Torvista Homes housing stock;
2. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes that the Audit and Compliance Key Performance Indicators will be mirrored and reported for all other housing stock held by Torbay Council; and
3. that following consideration of the initial performance reports, future reports be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in line with the normal quarterly budget and performance monitoring reports.

42. Revenue and Capital Budget 2025/2026 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance – Councillor Tyerman and the Director of Finance – Malcolm Coe gave a presentation on the latest information in respect of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/2026 and responded to questions. It was noted that the amount of compensation towards the increased National Insurance contributions was not known but was expected to be significantly lower than the actual costs, this would need to be addressed by the Cabinet when they set their final budget proposals. Overall, it was anticipated that there was an additional £5.760m funding for the Base Revenue Budget and an additional £4.012m one off funding.

Members asked questions in relation to if the additional money for Domestic Abuse picked up the concerns of the Priorities and Resources Review Panel and how it compared to previous years; if the additional Social Care Grant would have implications for Council Tax going forward and how it would be split, especially in respect of the Integrated Care Organisation (ICO); how the Business Rates changes were calculated; how much was the National Insurance liability for the Council; would all the Extended Producer Liability be passported to SWISCo; was there any conditions attached to the £2.085m Recovery Grant; and when would the 2025/2026 Budget Digest be published.

Members were advised that the additional money for Domestic Abuse covered the areas of uncertainty plus an additional £100k.

In response to questions around the Social Care Grant, Members were advised that the Council had committed the equivalent of 2% Council Tax per annum for Adult

Social Care over the next five years as part of the agreement with the ICO and 50% of the additional money should be linked to the integrated contract. There was an opportunity to influence how the additional money was spent to ensure that it was used for Adult Social Care and not just offset against bottom line overspending and how it could be used to influence the market, encourage invest to save and how the ICO runs Adult Social Care moving forward. It was noted that in the past some of the funding had been used for schemes from community organisations which had helped support pressures in the NHS. Adult Social Care providers were also likely to have significant underfunding for the National Insurance pressures.

Members were advised that the liability to the Council, excluding schools and Children's Services and Adult Services contracts, for National Insurance was £1.7m.

The Board was informed that not all of the Extended Producer Liability funding would be passported to SWISCo as this was supposed to be about moving the cost of dealing with waste to the producer rather than the user. The full details were not yet known but there was likely to be flexibility on how the money was used but the Council needed to understand more about the costs involved. Members requested a written response on the amount of recycling collected over the Christmas period for the last two years.

It was noted that the £2.085m Recovery Grant was not ring fenced but was expected to be one off. It was aimed at helping struggling Councils and was targeted at Councils with high deprivation levels. Many Councils across the country had not received this grant. Business Rates calculations were based on Government Formulas.

It was anticipated that the Budget Digest would be published by the end of April.

The Board welcomed the additional funding announced by the Government but was concerned in respect of the uncertainty around the National Insurance liability.

Resolved (unanimously):

That subject to the following additional recommendation, the report to the Cabinet on the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2025/2026 be approved:

4. that a reserve be created for Children's Services to respond to any market pressures arising from National Insurance rate increases.

Chairman